

Risk Everything for God
August 3, 2014
Allen Power

Daniel Chapter Three

- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace.
- A Bible story known by almost every kid who ever attended Sunday School.
- The fact that it's so familiar might make us gloss over the point of Daniel chapter three.
- Let's study these verses asking God to show us in a fresh way the lesson they have for us.

Daniel 3:1–7 (ESV)

King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 2 Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 3 Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4 And the herald proclaimed aloud, "You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, 5 that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace." 7 Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

- **Anyone know how big this thing was (in feet)?**
- **What are some reasons King Nebuchadnezzar would have erected this statue?**
- **By the way, this was not a political rally. What was it? How can we tell?**
- **Why would the king have had music as a part of this ceremony?**
- **Why was it not a big deal to the king's pagan officials to bow down to the statue?**
- All the pagans are bowing down. But where are our Hebrew friends?
- If you were here last week as we studied Daniel chapter one, you'll recall five "R" words describing Daniel and his young friends: Resolve; Risk; Rely; Relationship; Reputation
- Daniel and his friends continued that formula for dealing with the pagan world around them.
- This got all of them promoted to high positions of responsibility in the government. However, as we'll see, when God's people have success in the pagan world they have a target on their back!

Daniel 3:8–12 (ESV)

8 Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. 9 They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. 11 And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

- **Why did these “certain Chaldeans” rat out Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?**
- **What were the three Hebrews doing before these Chaldeans spoke up? Not doing?**
- It appears these three chose to ignore the King’s foolish ceremony. There’s no reference to them picking a fight or launching a boycott.

Sinclair Ferguson writes:

“The people of faith do not have a psychological need to make a “big deal” out of their acts of heroism. They do not need always to be drawing attention to the fact that they are different from others. They simply act according to the Lord’s Word and allow their actions to speak...”

Ferguson, Sinclair (2004-07-15). *The Preacher’s Commentary - Volume 21: Daniel: Daniel: Daniel Vol 19* (p. 76). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

Followers of Christ don’t have to pick a fight with the pagan world, we can simply practice quiet, confident obedience. However, usually the fight comes looking for US.

- Nebuchadnezzar was really ticked off. Verse 13.

Daniel 3:13–18 (ESV)

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?” 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

- Notice that the king never asked them to renounce their God, just bow down to his.
- That’s how it often works even today. *“You can keep your God, just bow down to mine too.”*
- The three Hebrews were RESOLVED to stand on their convictions. They won’t bow down!
- **Verse 17: What did these three believe about what God COULD do?**
- **Also in 17: What did they say God WOULD do for sure?**
- Verse 18: Even if God didn’t miraculously deliver them they still wouldn’t bow.

Quoting Sinclair Ferguson again:

“Faith does not mean that we either know or understand what His specific purpose in our lives may be. It means a ready willingness to follow Him whatever His purpose.”

Ferguson, Sinclair (2004-07-15). *The Preacher’s Commentary - Volume 21: Daniel: Daniel Vol 19*. Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

Real faith says: “My God CAN do ANYTHING He chooses. But, no matter WHAT He chooses he’ll deliver me one way or another!” Real faith TRUSTS God when we don’t know His plan.

- So, the king was impressed with their faith and let 'em go, right? What happened?
- In our country we may not think it's likely we could lose our lives for worshipping ONLY the God of the Bible. Truth is it happens somewhere in the world almost every day.

Open Doors, a non-denominational group that supports persecuted Christians, reported last fall that 2,123 Christians were killed because of their faith in 2013, up from 1,201 in 2012, almost double. 1,213 of those martyrs were recorded in Syria alone. Some claim the numbers are much higher. <http://world.time.com/2014/01/08/deaths-of-christian-martyrs-doubled-in-2013/>

There are still martyrs who lose their lives rather than deny their faith or worship false gods. But that's way on the other side of the world. We'd never be faced with a Daniel chapter three kind of story in America, right? Sometimes it's not our life but our livelihood at risk.

Imagine, a national government puts something before all the people and says either comply to our orders or pay a high price. Some Christians say, *"We'll comply with the order up to the point it would cause us to compromise on Biblical principles. We won't do that."*

"Fine," says the government. *"Comply or we will impose gigantic financial fines that will drive you out of business."* **Sound familiar? How is this the same as Daniel chapter three?**

Before the recent Supreme Court ruling, Steve Green of Hobby Lobby was quoted in the Washington Post as saying this story in Daniel chapter three had been on his heart and mind. When asked what Hobby Lobby would do if the ruling went against them he said, *"I don't know what we will do but I am sure what we will not do,"* he said. He will say as the three men told the king, *"even if God does not deliver us, we still cannot do this."* (Daniel 3:16-18) http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/hobby-lobbys-steve-green-stands-on-faith-against-obamacare-mandate/2014/03/17/d17d0960-ae18-11e3-b8b3-44b1d1cd4c1f_story.html

- **How about you and me? Can you think of situations where Christians are pressured to "go along" with a pagan agenda or pay a high price? What are examples of that? Work? School? Family? Neighborhood?**
- We'd better get back to Babylon...the boys are still in that furnace!

Daniel 3:24–25 (ESV)

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." 25 He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

- Isn't it amazing when God chooses to act in a miraculous way, even the pagans recognize it!
- Who was that fourth man in the fire? An angel? A pre-incarnate Jesus? Scripture doesn't say. What IS clear, it was the presence of God in the midst of the fire.

Isaiah 43:2 (ESV)

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.

Deuteronomy 31:6 (ESV)

6 Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”

- Nebuchadnezzar didn't know the Lord personally, but he recognized power when he saw it.

Daniel 3:28 (ESV)

28 Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

So, What's The Takeaway?

1 Peter 4:12 (ESV)

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

When they were standing on the edge of the fiery furnace facing incineration...

- The three Hebrews believed if they would be loyal to God, He would deliver them one way or another.
- They knew God had the POWER to do a miracle...and for THEM in this case, He did!
- They also knew God might not choose to do a miracle...but either way it was a WIN/WIN for them. The question is: Do you and I have that kind of faith?
- Real faith says: “My God CAN do ANYTHING He chooses. But no matter WHAT He chooses he'll deliver me one way or another!”
- Real faith TRUSTS God even when we don't know His plan to deliver us.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

“The devil tempts us to destroy our faith, but God tests us to develop our faith, because a faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. False faith withers in times of trials, but true faith takes deeper root, grows and brings glory to God. This explains why God permitted the three Hebrew children to be tested and then thrown into the fiery furnace.”

Sooner or later, if we're loyal to God our faith will be tested. The question is how will we respond?